Seven Biblical Principles That Call For Infant Baptism

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Preface: How to use this booklet

For introductory level reading.

Appendix A contains samples of homilies that the author has given on this subject. Though they do not cover all the evidence, it is a quick introduction.

For a thorough study.

Read all seven principles in the main body of the booklet. This booklet will show that infant baptism is clearly taught in the New Testament. (Especially Principle #7)

For an in depth study.

Footnotes lead to extra areas of possible study. Also read Appendix B for information that many people have never explored.

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1 Interestingly, nowhere in the New Testament are women said to partake of the Lord’s Supper. Nowhere! So how do Baptists justify letting women partake of communion? There is no basis for it if the only standard is the New Testament; there were no women at the supper with the Lord Jesus and nowhere else in the New Testament are they commanded, permitted, or even said to have partaken of the Lord’s Supper. (Gal. 3:28 is not discussing the Lord’s Supper since in context it is referring to the change from circumcision to baptism: “As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female…” If this applied to all church matters, then women could be elders, could preach in church, etc. and Paul would contradict himself. The context clearly indicates that baptized women, slaves and Gentiles “are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (3:29). Notice that the next verse says the same thing about our children: “Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child…” (4:1) Children continue to be “heirs according to the promise” along with the believers mentioned in 3:26-29. It is arbitrary to say that the heirs of verse 29 are baptized, but not the heirs of 4:1) But we confidently admit women to this sign and seal of the covenant because women partook of the Passover feast in the Old Testament, and the New Testament never annuls the Old Testament practice of women partaking of the covenant meal. (As will be shown, there is stronger New Testament evidence for infant baptism than for women’s participation in the Lord’s Supper!)
Principle #1 – The Old Testament says a lot about baptism; let’s not ignore it.

Unless the New Testament explicitly changes an Old Testament command or practice, it continues to apply (Matt. 5:17-19; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; 1 John 2:6-8), and such changes were already anticipated in the Old Testament (Acts 26:22; Heb. 3:5; Acts 17:11). Appendix B demonstrates that infant baptism (of both boys and girls) began at the time of Moses. This application of the sign of the covenant has never been revoked. Instead, the New Testament treats Old Testament baptisms as being part of “the foundation” upon which Christian faith and practice is to be built (Heb. 6:1-3). We cannot “go on to maturity” until those “elementary principles” are mastered (Heb. 6:1). This is why Hebrews connects Christian baptism (Heb. 10:22) with Old Testament baptisms (Heb. 9:10).

The Old Testament speaks a great deal about baptism. The Ethiopian Eunuch asks about baptism based on the passage in Isaiah that he was

2 This explains why the Old Testament mode of baptism by sprinkling/pouring continues to be practiced as well. All of the “various baptisms” (Heb. 9:10) in the Old Testament are said to be by sprinkling: “sprinkling” (v. 13), “sprinkled” (v. 19), “sprinkled” (v. 21). Though Presbyterians accept both modes of baptism: 1) affusion (sprinkling or pouring) and 2) immersion, we believe that both Old and New Testaments call for affusion. This was the mode that God used when He baptized in the Spirit. The action was with the Spirit (teaching us that salvation is not by works, but by God’s action upon us). God’s baptism is described with the following words: “the Holy Spirit has come upon you” (Acts 1:8), “I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh” (Acts 2:17), “He poured out this which you now see and hear” (Acts 2:33), “the Holy Spirit fell upon all” (Acts 10:44), “the gift of the Holy Spirit has been poured out” (Acts 10:44), “the Holy Spirit fell upon them” (Acts 11:15). Those baptized were clearly passive, while the Spirit was acting upon those being baptized. Thus, in the New Testament, outward ceremonial purification of “our bodies” should correspond to the Spirit’s work of “having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience” (Heb. 10:22). Immersion ruins this imagery by having the baptized person as the active worker and the water being passive. We must allow Scripture to define the term baptism. For a more detailed examination of this subject, read the tract Baptism by Sprinkling, by Rev. Ben Lacy Rose. For more in depth study, read the following books: 1) William the Baptist, by James M. Chaney (a very lively debate between a Baptist and a Presbyterian). 2) Holy Baptism: Word Keys Which Unlock the Covenant, by Duane E. Spencer. 3) Baptizo: An Inquiry into the Meaning of the Word, in three volumes, by James W. Dale (a massive treatise that deals with every occurrence of the word βαπτίζω in secular and religious Greek). 4) The Meaning and Mode of Baptism, by Jay Adams.
Our children have always been in the covenant • 3

reading (Acts 8:28-39 with Is. 52:15) and the Jews expected the Messiah to baptize (John 1:25) based on such passages as Ezek. 36:25-27, Is. 52:15, etc. Too many people consider themselves “New Testament only” believers. But it is important to realize that the only Bible of the church for several years was the Old Testament (Acts 8:32,35; 17:2,11; 18:24,28; Rom. 16:26; 2 Tim. 3:15-17). If we are to be Bereans, we will search the Old Testament Scriptures (as well as the New) to see whether this doctrine of baptism is true (Acts 17:11). Thus, I would encourage you to read all seven principles in this booklet since they all interact with various dimensions of the Old Testament teaching on baptism. Paul made clear that he had been “saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come” (Acts 26:22; cf. Heb. 3:5; Acts 17:11). Thus, every New Testament doctrine (including baptism) was anticipated in the Old Testament so that the new is in the Old concealed and the old is in the New revealed.

Both Baptists and Paedo-Baptists admit women to the sacrament of sanctification (Passover - Lord’s Supper) because they have evaluated the evidence of both the Old and New Testaments. On every doctrine, we must submit to the authority of the whole Bible. Without this first principle, not only would women be excluded from the Lord’s Supper, but we would have only one guideline for the degrees of consanguinity (can’t marry your mother), we would have no prohibition of bestiality, and we would be without guidance on a host of societal and family issues. It is my plea that those who study the issue of baptism be just as fair in evaluating who can be admitted to the sacrament of justification by faith. All of the principles in this booklet should be given equal time in your effort to be Bereans. So rather than asking, “Where does the New Testament repeat the command to apply the sign of the covenant to children?” we should be asking, “Where does the New Testament clearly remove children from the sign of the covenant?”

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3See Rom. 4:11; Col. 2:11-12; Rom. 2:25-29; Phil 3:3 for circumcision as a sign and seal of justification by faith, and see Acts 8:37; 2:38 for baptism.

4Though we will later show that there is clear New Testament evidence.
Principle #2 – Our children have always been in the covenant

Every covenant that God has ever made with man has always included his household. God’s promise is, “I will be a God to you and to your children after you.” As we will see, the New Covenant has not changed this principle. Now that doesn’t mean that the whole family was automatically saved. But God made His claim upon the whole family, and gave His promises to the whole family, which promises could be laid hold of by faith. Even individual covenants (like God’s covenant with Phinehas) followed this pattern. Examples:

Adam: Adam’s fall affected all who were in the covenant of creation. “through one man’s offence, judgment came to all men.” God’s promise of grace after the fall also affected his children: “I will put enmity between you [Satan] and the woman and between your seed and her seed.” (Gen. 3:15)

Noah: God promised Noah, “I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you.” (Gen. 9:9).

Abraham: To Abraham God said, “And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you.” (Gen. 17:7)

Isaac: “...to you and your descendants...” (Gen. 26:4)

Jacob: “...to you and your descendants with you...” (Gen. 28:4)

And the same was true of the Mosaic and Davidic covenants, as well as the individual covenants like that made with Phinehas.

Now the question may be asked, “Where has the New Testament explicitly excluded children from the covenant?” And the answer is that there is not one single verse in the New Testament that excludes them. Instead we find explicit inclusion of children in the covenant promises, and more to the point, an explicit linking of baptism with the Abrahamic covenant. For example, John the Baptist ties in his baptism with the Abrahamic covenant (Matthew 3:9; Luke 3:8). Peter ties his discussion

Contrary to popular opinion, Scripture does use the word “covenant” in connection with the original creation (Jer. 33:20,21,25,26) and Adam (Hosea 6:7). Certainly the features of a covenant are richly in evidence in Genesis 1-3.

Baptists often go to great lengths to insist that John’s baptism was not rooted in the Old Testament and was not proselyte baptism. Why? Because Jewish proselyte baptism always baptized the whole family, including the infants. Thus it is significant that John ties his
Faith and repentance have the same importance. Baptism with the covenant promise (Acts 2:38-39), and says that this “promise is to you and to your children...” (Acts 3:39). Paul ties his message of baptism with the covenant to Abraham in Acts 13:24-26. Acts 16:31 illustrates this Abrahamic pattern when it says, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.” And verse 33 says, “And immediately he and all his family were baptized.” Galatians 3:26-29 lists baptized members who are heirs of the promise given to Abraham. That alone ought to clue us into the inclusion of children since every promise ever given to Abraham was to Abraham and his “seed.” But the next verse explicitly says that a “child” of such parents is an “heir” (4:1) even before the “guardians” bring him to faith (4:2 with 3:23-24). Baptism is also tied to other covenants which included children such as the Noahic covenant (1 Peter 3:20-21), the Davidic covenant (Acts 2) and the Mosaic covenant (Hebrews 10:22 in context of Hebrews 9-10). The New Testament is very clear: children are members of the covenant and heirs of the “covenants of promise,” and baptism is the sign of being admitted to the covenant.
Principle #3 – Faith and repentance have the same importance now that they had with Abraham and the sign of circumcision.

Faith and repentance are necessary before an adult can be baptized together with his children because he and his children are outside the covenant. The verses that prove this principle are the very verses that Baptists use to try to disprove infant baptism. The verses which are said to mandate “believers baptism” only, are Acts 2:38; 8:37; Mark 16:16. Acts 2:38 says, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Baptists say, repentance is a clear prerequisite to baptism.

7 Sometimes Jeremiah 31:31-34 (quoted in Hebrews 8:7-13 and 10:16-18) is given as a proof text that the New Testament community would be a community only of believers. This does not follow however for the following reasons. 1) Notice that neither baptism nor circumcision is mentioned in the passage. 2) Nor does the passage contrast the Abrahamic “covenant of circumcision” with the New Covenant, but the Mosaic covenant. It specifically says, “Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt (Jer. 31:32). Paul makes very clear that “the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God, that it should make the promise of no effect” (Gal. 3:17). Thus we are in the Abrahamic covenant of promise: Matt. 8:11; Rom. 4:11-25; 9:6-8; Gal. 3:7,16,17,29; 4:22-31; etc.) 3) If this passage has any bearing on who may receive baptism, then it argues equally well against Baptists since the passage is saying what will happen, not what should happen. It is saying that in the New Covenant purpose, “all shall know me from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord, ‘For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.’” (Jer. 31:34). Baptists on occasion baptize those who do not make genuine profession of faith since no one can read the heart. Even the apostles baptized many adults who made profession but were not true believers (Acts 8:13-24; 1 John 2:19; etc.). There is no church on earth that can be absolutely guaranteed that all its members are elect. 4) The same thing is said about the Abrahamic covenant as is said about the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31. The covenant was only with the elect. Even though the sign of the covenant was applied to Ishmael, Ishmael was not in the covenant (Gen.17:23-27; Gal. 4:21-31). The Abrahamic covenant was ultimately made only with those who were in true union with Christ (Gal. 3:16,26-29). All of the promises of the Abrahamic covenant were made to Christ (Gal. 3:16; 2 Cor. 1:20; Rom. 15:8; 9:6) and thus to the elect whom Christ took upon Him (Heb. 2:16; Gal. 3:16,26-29; Rom. 9:6-8).
Faith and repentance have the same importance. An infant cannot repent, therefore an infant cannot be baptized. Now that sounds plausible on the surface, but in a moment we will see that there is a glaring logical fallacy in applying the responsibilities of adults to infants. Before we show that fallacy, let me quote the other two Baptist proof-texts. In Acts 8:37 in response to the Eunuch’s request to be baptized Peter says, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” Again they say, belief is a prerequisite to baptism, and if you do not believe with all your heart, then you may not be baptized. One last text is Mark 16:16 which says, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be damned.” Again belief comes before baptism here. “He who believes and is baptized.” An infant is incapable of belief, therefore an infant cannot be baptized.

Now my reply is that we believe exactly what those passages say. Before an adult can be baptized (and in every passage he is clearly talking to adults about adults) he must show evidence of belief and repentance. That’s clear. That’s something we insist on. But notice that the texts say nothing about infants. In fact if the logic of the argument is pressed, you will see that it falls to the ground on those very texts themselves. Take the last passage for instance. It says, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved.” The logic is, belief must precede baptism, but since it cannot in an infant, an infant cannot be baptized. But if the logic holds for the first half of the sentence, it should hold for the last half. The second half says, “but he who does not believe will be damned.” An infant cannot believe therefore an infant is damned. Is that what it’s saying? Well, if you read “infant” into the passage in the first half, you have to read it into the second half. Obviously that logic is incorrect since Scripture speaks of at least five infants being saved before or shortly after birth (Psalm 22:9-10; 2 Sam. 12:15-23; 1 Kings 14:13; Jer. 1:4; Luke 1:41,44). The simple truth is that infants were not in view in the command to believe before being baptized, or the verse would prove that infants can’t be saved. And the same logic holds true for many subjects in Scripture. For instance, Paul makes an absolute command in 2 Thessalonians 3:10, “If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.” Does that mean that since an infant cannot work, therefore an infant should not eat? No. There is the recognition that Paul is dealing with adults when he says that. You cannot reason from speeches to adults as to what can happen to infants. There has to be a specific prohibition of the sign of the covenant to children, and that is nowhere to be found in the New Testament.
By the way, I might point out that the Old Testament clearly taught the same principle for circumcision. Before an adult could get circumcised together with his children, he had to repent and believe (Rom. 4:10-12; 2:25-29; Ex. 12:48; Josh. 5). Israel later apostatized and failed to maintain that distinction\(^8\), but that distinction was God’s plan. Joshua 5 is an excellent example of that principle being carried out. The Jews who died in the wilderness in unrepentant rebellion were not allowed to circumcise their children. Moses did not allow it because they were an unbelieving generation (vv. 5-6 - notice the “For” at the beginning of verse 6; cf. Heb. 3:16-4:3). Thus they were treated as no better than Egyptians (v. 9). It was not until after evidence of true faith in God (Josh 1-4 contrasted with Hebrews 3:16-19) that they were circumcised. But their households were then circumcised right along with them. And that’s what we find in the New Testament. Adults are admonished to believe, and then baptism is applied to the whole household. (See principles 6-8)

\(^8\)Much like Roman Catholics and apostate mainline Protestants continue to baptize their children even though they are unbelievers. The fact that they abuse God’s sign does not mean that God’s purpose was to blur the distinction between believer and unbeliever.
Principle #4 – To deny infant baptism is to deny the “everlasting” character of one of three “everlasting signs” given in the Old Testament

There are only three signs that are said to be “everlasting signs,” and each one (though modified by the New Testament) continues to be an abiding principle. Denying infant baptism denies the “everlasting” character of one of those signs (see next principle for more details). The three “everlasting” signs that will last till heaven and earth pass away are the Passover, the Sabbath and circumcision. They transition into the New Covenant signs of Lord’s Supper, Lord’s Day and Baptism.

Passover is said to be an everlasting sign of the covenant (Exodus 12:14,17).

Since almost all evangelicals believe that the Lord’s Supper is the New Testament counterpart to Passover (Matt. 26:17-30; etc.), I won’t belabor this one. However, I will remind Baptists that they should be consistent with their treatment of this “everlasting sign” and the “everlasting sign” of circumcision! If the New Testament alone determines who is and who is not admitted to a sacrament, then they have no right admitting women. Nowhere does the New Testament speak about women partaking of the Lord’s Supper. The only basis available for admitting women to the Lord’s Supper is a basis that can be equally well used for admitting infants to baptism. We admit women to the covenant meal because they were admitted in the Old Testament. We admit infants to the initiatory rite because they were admitted in the Old Testament.

The Sabbath is said to be an everlasting or perpetual statute since it is a sign of the everlasting covenant.

(Exodus 31:16-17) (Ezek. 20:12,20; Is. 55:3 with 56:1-8; Exodus 31:16-17). Therefore, though the New Covenant makes a change in the day, it does not abolish what is “perpetual” or “everlasting.” “There
remains therefore a Sabbath rest (or literally a “Sabbatism”⁹) for the people of God.” (Heb. 4:9). The Greek of Matthew 28:1, Mark 16:1-2; Luke 24:1 and John 20:1 shows that while there was a passing away of the Jewish form of the Sabbath (Greek σαββατων) there was an ushering in of a first day Sabbath (“first day of the week” is literally “first day Sabbath [σαββατων]”). Observance of this “first day Sabbath” is now commanded in the New Testament. For example, Paul says, “as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day Sabbath [σαββατων] let each one of you lay something aside...” (Literal rendering of 1 Corinthians 16:1-2). Thus, while the multitude of Jewish days (including the Saturday observance of the Sabbath) have been abolished (Colossians 2:16), there is one day which is “the Lord’s day” even in New Testament times.

Circumcision is the third sign and seal.

(Rom. 4:11) It is called an everlasting sign (Gen. 17:7,10,11,13) of the everlasting covenant (Gen. 17:7,13). And Genesis 17 specifically mentions that “My covenant shall be in your flesh (no spiritualizing here!) for an everlasting covenant.” (v. 13). Till heaven and earth pass away, the Abrahamic covenant must be in the flesh of believers and their children (Gen. 17:10-14). Since the Mosaic covenant could in no way abrogate the Abrahamic covenant (Gal. 3:17), we are spoken of as being under that Abrahamic covenant now (Gal. 3; 4:22-31; Rom. 4). And that covenant is “the covenant of circumcision” (Acts 7:8). The next principle will detail how baptism can be treated by the New Testament as “Christian circumcision,” but pause here to reflect upon the way the other two “everlasting signs” were carried over into the New Testament. In each case, the central purpose of the sign continued in the New Testament, even though there were some outward changes. It is not enough to say that spiritual circumcision fulfills the requirement of “everlasting” in Genesis 17:13. Old Testament saints were required to have both the sign and the reality (of spiritual circumcision) that the sign pointed towards. One must not confuse the sign with what is signified. There must be some way in which God’s covenant sign “shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant” (Gen. 17:13). And if that is granted, then it takes New Testament authority to specify every change that is made.

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⁹Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich, A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament defines this word as a “Sabbath observance.”
Principle #5 – Baptism is the New Testament counterpart to circumcision, and the baptized Gentile is “counted as if” circumcised (Rom. 2:26).

In this section we will be demonstrating that Baptism is the New Testament counterpart to circumcision. In the last paragraph we have already seen that believers are members of “the covenant of circumcision” (i.e. the Abrahamic covenant). Thus it is natural for Scripture to describe us as “the circumcision” (Phil 3:3) and to describe those outside the covenant as being both uncircumcised in spirit as well as uncircumcised in flesh: (“...you being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh...” [Col. 2:13]) The question often arises, “How can we be called the circumcision if there is not a literal circumcision of the flesh?” The simple answer is, “The same way Old Testament women could be called ‘the circumcision.’” Though some nations practiced female circumcision, God (no doubt out of mercy) only had the male circumcised because she took part in the ceremonial baptism that accompanied circumcision (Lev. 12; 15; Numb. 31:18,23 with Deut. 21:10-14). (This “purification of separation” was also applied to proselytes who “died” to their Gentile background and were “born” into Judaism. The man [and his male children] would be circumcised and baptized, but the wife [and her

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10That this is referring to physical flesh can be seen by the way circumcision in the flesh is contrasted with circumcision in the heart throughout Scripture: Compare Gen. 17:13-14 where it speaks of the need to be circumcised “in your flesh,” and where those who are uncircumcised “in your flesh” were to be treated as being cut off from the covenant. When the sign of the Abrahamic covenant is not in your flesh you are treated as a pagan under judgment. Compare that language with our present state as implied in Colossians 2:13.

11See G. Friedrich, ed., Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. VI, pp. 72ff for examples. Many tribes continue to practice female circumcision of the outer labia to this day.

12See Appendix B for a more detailed study of these and other Scriptures dealing with “the baptism of nidah.”
female children] only received the baptism. Yet all were from that moment on treated as “Jews,” “Israelites,” “the circumcision,” and “clean.” That is why it would have been no surprise to Jews to see Paul saying in Colossians 2:11-12 that spiritual circumcision and spiritual baptism are exactly the same thing, or of saying that baptism is “Christian” circumcision [Col. 2:11-12]. The early Greek fathers

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\[13\] See Oscar Cullmann, *Baptism in the New Testament,* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1973) for a scholarly examination of this subject. There were times in later Jewish history when Jews applied this substitution of baptism for circumcision in an unbiblical fashion to prominent Gentiles who refused to get circumcised. They allowed them to be called “the circumcision” by virtue of the proselyte baptism they underwent. (See Sibylline Oracles, book IV, 164). See Kittel, ed., *TDNT,* vol. I, pp. 335f. See William Barrows, *The Church & Her Children* for a fuller discussion.

\[14\] I.e., the circumcision that pertains to Christ as opposed to the circumcision that pertains to Moses and Abraham. There are three possible interpretations of the Greek phrase τὴν περιτομὴν τοῦ χριστοῦ (the circumcision of Christ). 1) The interpretation I have given is followed by such notable scholars as Ferrar Fenton, John Eadie, J.O Busswell, Lightfoot and many others. This takes the “of Christ” as an attributive genitive. This is a very common usage in Greek. 2) Others, like Faucet, see this as an objective genitive (i.e. the noun in the genitive receives the action). This would mean that it is speaking of Jesus being circumcised. This could be the circumcision of the baby Jesus (Luke 2:21-24) or (as Kline says) the circumcision/baptism of the cross when He was “cut off” from the land of the living. 3) Others take it as a subjective genitive (the noun in the genitive produces the action). This would then refer to our regeneration (=spiritual circumcision = spiritual baptism). Whichever interpretation of this clause is accepted, the bottom line of the exegesis as a whole (see next footnote for further details) is that baptism is indeed Christian circumcision. If the things signified are equal (spiritual circumcision equals spiritual baptism) then the signs are equal.

\[15\] It is important to note that whatever interpretation one gives of “the circumcision of Christ” in the previous footnote, there is no escape from the implications of the grammatical use of the aorist passives (περιτεμήθης, συνταφέντες, συνηγερθήτε) throughout the passage (see Paul K. Jewett in footnote 17). Especially important is the adverbial clause “buried with Him in baptism” which modifies the main verb “you were circumcised.” There are only two possible ways this participle could be used: 1) As an instrumental participle. This would be saying “You were circumcised . . . by being buried with Him in baptism.” This is the interpretation of some like J. O. Buswell. Examples of this usage in Greek are Acts 16:16; Mark 6:27; 1 Tim. 1:12; etc. 2) As a temporal participle. This would be saying, “You were circumcised . . . when you were buried with Him in baptism.” This is the interpretation of scholars like Ferrar Fenton, Vincent, Moffatt, Amplified New Testament, etc. For this usage see Wenham, *Elements of N.T. Greek,* pp. 147ff., and Dana & Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament,* pp. 226,230. On either interpretation, baptism and circumcision are identified as being the same. Thus whether you say with Buswell (Calvin seems to say the same) “You were circumcised . . . by being baptized” or whether you say with others, “You were circumcised . . . when you were buried with Him in baptism,” the
Justyn Martyr, Gregory Nazianzen, Cyril and others called circumcision a “baptism,” and baptism “the great circumcision” or “circumcised by washing.” They used the terms interchangeably just like the Jews. Therefore, if the Jews treated female children as if they were circumcised when they received the baptism of Leviticus 12:15; etc., we can biblically be treated as “the circumcision” when we receive Christian baptism.

Interestingly, the “as if” language is used in both directions. When John the Baptist later said that Israel had been excommunicated, and that they were no longer children of Abraham but were Gentiles in need of this proselyte baptism (cf. e.g. Matt. 3:5-12) he greatly offended the Pharisees. He was treating them as if they were uncircumcised (cf. Rom. 2:25 with Matt. 3:8-10). The same “as if” language that was applied to women for circumcision and to unbelieving Jews for uncircumcision is applied to baptized believers. Romans 2:26 says that we are “counted as if” we are circumcised. And Romans 4:12 says that Abraham’s fatherhood extends not only to faith (Romans 4:16), but he is also said to be “the father of circumcision” to non-Jews (Rom. 4:12). Thus Philippians 3:2-3 can say that though Jews are the “concision” (translated as “mutilation” by many translations) “we [baptized believers] are the circumcision.” Though believing Gentiles were “once” [povte, that is “once” but no longer] Gentiles in the flesh” (Eph. 2:11), and “at that time you were . . . aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12), that is no longer the case because we have been brought near (Eph. 2:13) and have been made “fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.” (Eph. 2:19). The inference of Colossians 2:13; Ephesians 2:11 and the other passages is that we are no longer Gentiles in the flesh. We are Israel (Gal. 6:16; Rom. 9:6-8), Jews (Rom. 2:28-29), a holy nation (1 Pet. 2:9; Tit. 2:14), children of Abraham (Gal. 3:7,29) and the circumcision (Phil 3:3). It is no wonder then that Paul ends his arguments against circumcision of the penis in Galatians with his

same conclusion is reached. See Appendix C for a diagramatical analysis of Colossians 2:11-12.


17This is the same Greek word that is used for the imputation of Christ’s righteousness (λογιζομαι). We are not actually perfectly righteous, but in God’s books we are given Christ’s righteousness as an imputation. In Romans 2:26 the Greek is clear that a physical circumcision is “imputed” to us.
discussion of the true significance of baptism (Galatians 3:27-29) and ties Spiritual Baptism in with the significance of the promise to Abraham (v. 29). The promise that circumcision signed and sealed is the same promise that Baptism signs and seals: it is the gift of the Spirit (Gal. 3:14). Thus baptism is “Christian circumcision.”

In fact, so convincing is the connection between circumcision and baptism in the Greek of Colossians 2:11-12 that many Baptists now agree that baptism is the New Testament counterpart to circumcision. However, they believe that the New Testament has authorized a change in the application of this outward sign. Their proof texts are Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38 and Acts 8:37. They argue that this new emphasis on faith has changed the covenant from an outward administration to an inward one. For a refutation of their use of these verses see principle #3. The simple fact is, *we cannot be in the “covenant of circumcision” (Acts 7:8) without circumcision being carried over in some way into the New Testament*. But if it has come over into the New Testament, it must be governed by the same laws governing circumcision unless there are clear changes that have been made.

For further evidence of the identity between baptism and circumcision, I offer the following chart.

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18Paul K. Jewett says of Colossians 2:11-12, “the use of the aorist passives throughout the passage (περιεπήθετο, συντάφωντες, συνηγερθήτε) makes it evident that to experience the circumcision of Christ, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, is the same thing as being buried and raised with him in baptism through faith. If this be true, the only conclusion we can reach is that the two signs, as outward rites, symbolize the same inner reality in Paul’s thinking. Thus circumcision may fairly be said to be the Old Testament counterpart of Christian baptism. So far, the Reformed argument, in our judgment, is biblical. In this sense ‘baptism,’ to quote the Heidelberg Catechism, ‘occupies the place of circumcision in the New Testament.”’ Paul K. Jewett, *Infant Baptism and the Covenant of Grace*, p. 89. See the same admission in David Kingdom, *Children of Abraham*, p. 54.

19As mentioned in footnote 6 (under principle #3), sometimes Jeremiah 31:31-34 (quoted in Hebrews 8:7-13 and 10:16-18) is given as a proof text that the New Testament community would be a community only of believers. See comments made there.

20A similar chart was first developed by Kenneth A Horner, Jr. in his interesting booklet, *The Biblical Basis of Infant Baptism* (Coventry, Conn: RPCES, 1978), p. 23.
Baptism is the New Testament counterpart to circumcision • 15

**Baptism Has The Same Meaning As Circumcision**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Circumcision</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Baptism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rom. 4:11; Col. 2:11-12; Rom. 2:25-29; Phil 3:3</td>
<td>Justification by faith</td>
<td>Acts 8:37; 2:38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jer. 4:4; Lev. 26:14</td>
<td>Cleansing from defilement</td>
<td>1 Pet. 3:21; Acts 22:16; 1 Cor. 7:14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezra 9:2; Is. 6:13; Mal. 2:15</td>
<td>For those who are holy or &quot;set apart&quot; by a parent’s relationship to God</td>
<td>1 Cor. 7:14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josh 5:9 with verses 2-9</td>
<td>Death to world (&quot;Egypt&quot;) and entrance into new life</td>
<td>Romans 6:3-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deut. 30:6; Jer. 4:4; Gal. 3:16,29; Gen. 17:7,8; Col. 2:11</td>
<td>Union with God</td>
<td>Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:1-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rom. 2:28-29; Jer. 4:4</td>
<td>Necessity of an inner experience, namely spiritual circumcision and spiritual baptism</td>
<td>1 Pet. 3:21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen. 17:10,23-27</td>
<td>Placed on whole households</td>
<td>Acts 16:15,33; 1 Cor. 1:16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is interesting to note that the early church also based their practice of infant baptism upon the connection between circumcision and baptism. I have already given evidence of Greek-speaking church fathers calling baptism “the great circumcision.” The following quotes are a few of the multitude of witnesses to the universal practice of infant baptism in the early church.21

1) Irenaeus (born before the apostle John died and taught by Polycarp, John’s disciple) speaks of baptism being applied to “infants and little ones and children and youths and older persons” in about 180 AD.22

2) Origin (born 185) said “the church has a tradition from the apostles to give baptism even to infants.”23

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21 Prior to 1537 AD, when the Anabaptists arose, there were only a few church fathers who questioned the wisdom of infant baptism. According to many paedobaptist scholars, all those who opposed infant Baptism in the early church did so on heretical grounds: they thought that baptism cleansed from all sins (including so-called “mortal sins”) and therefore, the longer baptism was postponed in one’s life, the better. (If you sinned a mortal sin after baptism you might perish.) Some suggested that it would be better to postpone baptism till after marriage in case the person fell into carnal sin. Others even suggested postponing baptism until just before death. Interestingly, those who opposed infant baptism acknowledged its universal and ancient practice. They argued on pragmatic grounds.

3) Hyppolytus in 215 AD clearly spoke of the baptism of infants saying, “And first baptize the little ones; and if they can speak for themselves, they shall do so; if not, their parents or other relatives shall speak for them. Then baptize the men, and last of all the women.”

4) Fidus wrote a circular in 250 AD to all the churches in his Presbytery saying that Baptism should be delayed until the eighth day after a child was born on the analogy of circumcision.

5) Even Baptists have to admit that the first church controversy that ever arose over baptism arose in 253 AD. And interestingly, the raging controversy was: on what day should an infant be baptized? Some felt that Fidus was correct and that the analogy between circumcision and baptism demanded the literal eighth day after birth. Others argued that it could be earlier. Since Sunday is the eighth day in Biblical symbolism, the latter view prevailed. But we have no evidence that even one elder in that ecumenical council raised an objection to the propriety of infant baptism. They all assumed its apostolic authority!

6) Augustine (born AD 354) wrote a great deal about infant baptism and said that infant baptism was practiced universally, and that it was based on apostolic authority and not the authority of councils. In other words, they got it from the Scriptures!

Many other examples could be given from Aristides (who began writing in 117 AD), to Justyn Martyr (born AD 100), to Cyprian (who in 251 AD asked the General Assembly if baptism could be administered before the eighth day), to Clement of Alexandria (who in 195 AD wrote a tract that included a phrase on infant baptism) to a whole host of others in the third and fourth centuries. History certainly speaks in favor of infant baptism! (Though our authority should only rest in the Scriptures as many of those same church fathers remind us. They insisted on apostolic authority!)

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23 Origen, Commentary on Romans.
24 The Apostolic Tradition of Hyppolytus, p. 45
Principle #6 – God treats the children of believers differently from the world on many levels.

There is an indisputable difference between children of professing believers and children of unbelievers. This is not necessarily the difference of heart (i.e. they may not always be regenerate), but God clearly promises things to our children that He does not to others.

1. The children of believers are said to be “holy.” In other words, they have been set apart by the covenant for God’s special working. (Ezra 9:2; Mal. 2:15; Is. 6:13; 1 Cor. 7:14) “And did He not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit? [speaking here of a spiritual unity in marriage] And why one? He seeks holy offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. For the LORD God of Israel says that He hates divorce.” (Mal 2:15-16a)

2. Thus these children continue to be heirs of the Abrahamic covenant. (Galatians 4:1 - “Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child…”). Nowhere is the child of unbelievers said to be an heir of the Abrahamic covenant. Furthermore, it is arbitrary to say that the “heirs” of Galatians 3:26-29 have the right to be baptized, but not the “heir” in the very next verse (Galatians 4:1). It is of the very nature of the Abrahamic covenant to include children, and this Abrahamic covenant was extended to “all the families of the earth” (Acts 3:25). On what basis can an “heir” of the Abrahamic covenant (4:1) be excluded from the covenant sign?

3. The covenant is made with children even before they were born (Deut. 29:10,11,13-15,29 with Acts 2:39,33) (Deut. 29:10,11,13-15,29 with Acts 2:39,33)

4. Even when the parents later apostatize, the children that have been brought into covenant are said to be born unto God. (i.e., they aren’t Satan's or ours). “They have sacrificed their children whom they bore to Me, passing them through the fire, to devour them.” (Ezek. 23:37). “Moreover you took your sons and your daughters, whom you bore to Me, and these you sacrificed to them to be devoured. Were your acts of harlotry a small matter, that you have slain My children and offered them up to them by causing them to pass through the fire?” (Ezek. 16:20-21)
5. Christ blessed the little children and said of these covenant children, “of such is the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 19:14; Mark 10:16; Luke 18:15-16) “Then they also brought infants (The word for “infants” is Brevfoß a word used for newborns or unborn fetuses e.g. Luke 1:41,44) to Him that He might touch them” etc.

6. Covenant children have angels assigned to them (Matt. 18:10).

7. God promises that in the New Covenant He will pour out His blessings on our offspring; not only on us (Is. 44:3; 40:11).

8. The New Testament never addresses the children of believers as heathen, but always as church members or covenant children (Colossians 3:20; Eph. 6:1ff) Thus, children are expected to grow in grace. Parents are expected to bring up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.


10. Though it is clear that our infants are depraved and sinful from conception (Psalm 51:5; 58:31) and thus justly deserve spiritual and physical death (Rom. 6:23), believing parents can lay claim to the many promises of God’s blessing upon generation after generation. There are at least five cases infants who were saved before or shortly after birth: John (Luke 1:41,44), Jeremiah (Jer. 1:4), David (Ps. 22:9-10), David’s Son (2 Sam. 12:15-23) and Jereboam’s son (1 Kings 14:13). Likewise there are many examples like Timothy (2 Timothy 3:15 notice the Greek word Brevfouß or baby) which imply that there was never a time when they didn’t know and love the Lord.

11. The representational principle of parents has always held true. Adam’s posterity is judged because of Adam’s sin. But God’s grace made possible the reversal of that on a familial basis. The family of Noah was spared because of the faith of Noah (Gen. 6:8,18; 7:1; Heb. 11:7). God promised to bless Abraham’s descendants because of Abraham’s faith, and even said that through the coming Messiah “all the families of the earth would be blessed.” (Gen. 12:3; Acts 3:25) Thus it is natural for the New Testament to point to the example of Abraham when dealing with family salvation. For example, it was because of Zaccheus’ faith that Christ said, “today is salvation come to this household because he also is a son of Abraham” (Luke 19:9). Zaccheus as the covenantal head of the home brings salvation to the home because he had just become a son of Abraham. Every time a person comes to Christ in the New Testament
period he becomes “Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:29). We are heirs to the family promises given to Abraham! And thus in the very next verse (Galatians 4:1) the “child” is also said to be an “heir.” Thus, God blesses children over and over because of the faith of parents (Luke 1:41,44). In Matthew 9:18-19,23-26 the daughter of the Jewish official is healed because of the father’s faith (not the faith of the daughter). The same is true of the healing of the epileptic son (Matt. 17:14-18), and of the raising of the daughter to life (Luke 7:11-17), and the healing of the Nobleman’s son (John 4:46-54). It was expected that where faith was present in the parents, the whole family would worship and rejoice in God (Deut. 12:7,12; 14:26; Joel). And this principle was prophesied to continue into New Testament times when all families of the pagan nations would worship before God (Psalm 22:27). Thus the promise given by Paul in Acts 16:31 is no empty promise: “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.” That is God’s pattern. We should never see our children as being no better off than the children of unbelievers are.
Principle #7 – For those who insist on proof texts from the New Testament, we accommodate. There are New Testament passages which include children in the rite of baptism.

Unlike the arguments for including women in the Lord’s Supper (which must rely exclusively on principle #1 above), there is a great deal of New Testament evidence that children were baptized.

If you skipped over the first six principles, I would encourage you to return to them after you have read principle #7. Without the first six principles, you will have only a fraction of the solid proofs for infant baptism. This principle merely demonstrates that there are proof texts that specifically say that children were baptized. Principle #7 is the “proof text” approach, whereas the first six principles follow the deductive approach that is used to discover the doctrine of the Trinity and several other doctrines.

1. 1 Corinthians 7:14 clearly teaches infant baptism. A synonym for “unbaptized” is used when it says, “otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy.” Many Baptists will object that the word “holy” cannot imply that infants are baptized since the unbelieving spouse is also said to be “holy” or set apart to the Lord. With that statement I heartily agree. But what many fail to realize is that though both unbelieving spouse and children are said to be made “holy” or “sanctified,” only infants are said to be holy and cleansed (i.e., baptized). We will first look at the meaning of “holy,” and then at the meaning of the word “cleansed.” The verse says, “For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are

\[\text{Reference numbers:}\]

\[\text{25} \quad \alpha \gamma \iota \alpha \zeta \omega \quad \text{the verbal form of } \alpha \gamma \iota \\
\text{26} \quad \alpha \gamma \iota \alpha \zeta \omega \quad \text{the verbal form of } \alpha \gamma \iota \\
\text{27} \quad \alpha \kappa \alpha \theta \alpha \rho \tau \alpha \quad \text{the negative adjective form of } \kappa \alpha \theta \alpha \rho \omicron \sigma \omicron \varsigma \]
holy\textsuperscript{28} (1 Cor. 7:14). The word translated as “sanctified” or “holy” cannot mean “saved” or made subjectively holy. That would make nonsense of the word “unbeliever” and take away the force of verse 16 which is to give hope of the future salvation of the unbelieving spouse. (That is the same hope we have for our children; we do not believe in baptismal regeneration or even presupposed regeneration. That our children are “holy” does not mean they are saved!) Nor can it mean that the marriage relationship is made “legitimate” by the believing spouse and that this legitimizing of the marriage relationship makes the children “legitimate.”\textsuperscript{29} This interpretation is laden with several problems. First, the word “holy” is never used in this way elsewhere in Scripture. It always has at least some logical connection with its basic meaning of “to be set apart to God.”\textsuperscript{30} Second, this would be to imply that non-Christian marriages are illegitimate, and that children of non-Christian marriages are bastards. Further, it would imply that the separation of the “mixed marriage” couple (v. 15) would make the children retroactively bastards because of the absence of the believing partner. This is obviously a grasping at straws since Scripture indicates that even the marriages of unbelieving, non-Jews can be both lawful and unlawful (Mark 6:17-18), and not even the strictest interpretations on divorce and remarriage have said that divorce would retroactively illegitimatize the child. Because of this, some Baptists have avoided this interpretation and have merely said that whatever “holy” means, it can’t mean baptize since that would imply the baptism of the unbelieving spouse as well.\textsuperscript{31}

Whatever interpretation we give to “holy” or “sanctified,” it must mean the same thing for both unbelieving spouse and child. On the Paedo-Baptist interpretation, the normal sense of holy as “to be set apart to God,” is used. Geoffrey Bromiley summarizes the paedobaptist position well when he says that “in virtue of the other’s faith he or she is separated to God . . . and comes into the sphere of evangelical action and promise with a hope of future conversion. But the same is true of the children. (How

\textsuperscript{28} neuter form of ἁγιός

\textsuperscript{29} Many Baptists from John Gill on have taken this interpretation in order to avoid the implication of infant baptism.

\textsuperscript{30} See Bauer, Arndt & Gingrich, \textit{A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature}, and Thayer, \textit{Greek English Lexicon}.

\textsuperscript{31} We agree that “holy” does not mean baptized. Rather, the holiness is the rationale for the cleansing rite of baptism (see below).
much more so, one might suppose, when both the parents are confessing Christians."

In other words, contact with the believer has set the others apart in God’s plan for the special working of the Holy Spirit in their lives. This fits the context of the passage, which gives as one reason why the believer should not leave his/her unbelieving spouse as: “For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?” (v. 16). The hope that you (as believing spouse) will save your unbelieving spouse is parallel to you (as believing spouse) sanctifying your unbelieving spouse. It is the believing spouse who is key in their future salvation. Therefore, what Paul is saying to us in the second part of the verse is that if it were not for this covenantal sanctifying (setting apart) influence of the believing spouse, the children would have to remain in an “unclean” (unbaptized) state. It is the meaning of that word “unclean” that will now be discussed, beginning with the Old Testament and moving to the New Testament baptisms.

The same Greek word for “unclean” and its positive form “clean” is used as a noun (“a purification” or “a cleansing”), a verb (“to make clean” or “to purify”) and an adjective (“pure” or “clean”). The same is true of the words “holiness” (noun), “sanctified” (verb), and “holy” (adjective). For simplification when quoting a verse, I will insert the word for holy (αγιος) or clean (κακαρος) followed by the following abbreviations: neg. (negative form), n (noun), v (verbal form) and a (adjectival form). This way the flow of the sentence will not be interrupted. We will begin by quoting 1 Corinthians 7:14 again: “For the unbelieving husband is sanctified (αγιος v) by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified (αγιος v) by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean (κακαρος neg. a), but now they are holy (αγιος a).

There are two ways the word for (un)clean is used in the Bible: There is outward (covenantal) cleansing such as “the purifying (κακαρος a) of the flesh” by ritual baptisms (Heb. 9:13), and there is inward cleansing spoken of as the “purifying (κακαρος v) of their hearts” by the Holy Spirit (Acts 15:9). Which kind of uncleanness and cleanness is being talked about in 1 Corinthians 7:14? If Paul were referring to the purifying of the heart, then it would be teaching that children of one believer are

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32 Cf. e.g. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Children of Promise, p. 8.
33 Verse 10 defines these sprinkling ceremonies as Old Testament “washings,” and the literal rendering of washings is “Baptisms.”
automatically saved, and children of unbelievers are not saved. Though some people teach this, I believe it is a contradiction of the context (see above discussion on “holy”) and a contradiction of other Scriptures which insist that we are “born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God” (John 1:13 NIV). We Presbyterians simply do not believe in presupposed regeneration or in baptismal regeneration.

But if Paul is not implying that these children have already been regenerated, then the only other alternative is outward, covenantal purification, or what Hebrews speaks of as the “purifying of the flesh.” And if it is an outward cleansing, it must refer to baptism, since baptism is the only New Testament ritual that is said to purify the flesh. The following are some examples that use this word in 1 Corinthians 7:14 as a synonym for baptism. In John 3:25 (see context of verses 22-26), both John’s baptism and Christ’s baptism was spoken of as a “purification” (καθαρσίς n). Thus “unclean” is a synonym for “unbaptized,” and clean is a synonym for “baptized.”

Christian baptism is spoken of as having “our bodies washed with pure (καθαρσίς a) water” (Heb. 10:22). (See Numbers 19:9,13,20,21; 31:23,24; Ezek. 36:25; Heb. 9:13 for the usage of “pure water” or “water of purification” or “purifying water.”) Ephesians 5:26 says, “Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify (αγιοῦ) and cleanse (καθαρσίς v) it with the washing of water by the word.” This verse teaches clearly that being “sanctified” (set apart for the Holy Spirit’s special working) is not enough for membership in the church, and thus the unbelieving spouse could not be a member even though there is great hope of his/her being saved in the future. Nor is being “cleansed” with the washing of water sufficient, and thus children of unbelievers have no right to church membership even if someone was foolish enough to baptize them. To be a member of the church one must be sanctified and cleansed (1 Cor. 7:14; Eph. 5:26).

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34In John 3:22-24 it is recorded that both John and Christ baptized and that a dispute arose about the other group’s baptisms. Verse 25 continues talking about these baptismal questions saying, “Then there arose a dispute between some of John’s disciples and the Jews about purification. [same word as “unclean” in 1 Cor. 7:14 but without the negative] And they came to John and said to him, ‘Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified - behold He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him.”

35This is why we do not baptize children of parents who are unbelievers. They have not been made “holy” covenantally, therefore they should remain in an unclean state. The child
one who both sets people apart, and who declares them cleansed by water. Example: The Gentiles of Acts 10:28 were called “unclean” (καθαρός neg. a) because they were outside the covenant. But God showed Peter through the vision of the unclean animals, that God had extended the covenant to Gentiles. The Spirit set them apart to God when they were baptized with the Holy Spirit in a very dramatic way (10:44; 11:16). Peter accordingly baptized them into the church with water upon their profession of faith (10:47-48). When the apostles complained about Peter’s eating with these “unclean” Gentiles in Acts 11, Peter tells them the story, emphasizing God’s words, “What God has cleansed (καθαρός v) you must not call common.” (11:9). Then Peter explained the incident at Cornelius’ house and ended by saying, “And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning. Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, ‘John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’” (Acts 11:15-16). In this passage, Peter ties the concept of uncleanness to those outside the church, and cleansing is declared to be by the baptism of the Holy Spirit (internal cleansing) and the baptism of water (external cleansing). For other examples where the word used in 1 Corinthians 7:14 refers to outward, ritual cleansing in the New Testament, see Matt. 8:2,3; 10:8; 11:5; 23:25,26; Mark 1:40,41,42,44; 7:19; Luke 2:22; 4:27; 15:13,14; 7:22; 11:39; 17:14,17; John 2:6; 13:10-11; Rom. 14:20; Tit. 1:15; Heb. 9:22,23. In the New Testament context, 1 Corinthians 7:14 can mean nothing more nor less than, “otherwise your children would be unbaptized, but now they are holy.”

In the Old Testament, the same language could have referred to either ritual baptisms or to circumcision. The word “unclean” is the word that is used to describe the uncircumcised Gentiles (Is. 52:1; 35:8; Acts 10:28). But it is most frequently used in connection with the Old Testament baptisms. Whereas there is only one cleansing rite in the New Testament, there were many baptisms in the Old Testament (Heb. 6:2). Hebrews 9 describes several of these sprinkling ceremonies and calls them “washings” (v. 10 - or literally “baptisms”), each of which “sanctifies [αγιος v] for the purifying [καθαρος n] of the flesh” (v. 13). Note the same usage of language as in 1 Corinthians 7:14. As one example of those Old Testament cleansing baptisms, Leviticus 13 uses the same word as 1
Corinthians 7:14 to describe the “unclean” (κακόθαρσος neg. a) state of a man with “leprosy.” This ceremonial uncleanness makes it impossible for him to fellowship with God’s people in corporate worship. He is cast out (Lev. 13:46). If God heals him of his leprosy, he can be re-admitted. Since re-circumcision is impossible, baptism was used as a means of re-admitting him into the covenant community. In chapter 14 he says that the sprinkling of the “waters of purification” or “pure water” or “purifying water” (κακόθαρσος a) upon him makes him “clean” (κακόθαρσος a) (“... and he shall sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed (κακόθαρσος v) from the leprosy, and shall pronounce him clean (κακόθαρσος a)” (Lev. 14:7). Of course, proselyte baptism (of which John 3:22-24 is one example), falls into the category of water being used to declare “unclean” pagans to now be clean, Jews, and full members of the covenant. (See discussion of this under principle #5.) The examples from the Old Testament are too numerous to list. Being “unclean” in an outward, covenantal sense is well established. Therefore, whether we are looking at 1 Corinthians 7:14 through the eyes of the Old Testament or through the eyes of the New Testament, the phrase, “otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy” means nothing more and nothing less than “otherwise your children would be unbaptized, but now they are holy.” Using the “proof-text” method, we have found at least one verse that clearly teaches infant baptism. (See appendix B for the connection of this verse to the O.T. “baptism of nidah.” Paul was talking about something every Jew would have been familiar with.)

2. Galatians 3:26-4:1 lists those who are heirs of the Abrahamic covenant, and this list of covenant members explicitly includes as an “heir, ... a child” (4:1) Furthermore, the heirs of Christ are explicitly subsumed under the heading of “as many of you as were baptized into Christ” (3:29). Both Baptists and Presbyterians agree that those listed in 3:28-29 are in the Abrahamic covenant and thus to be baptized. But on what basis is the “child” of the very next verse (4:1) excluded when he is explicitly said to be an “heir” and even compared with the status of the “slave” who was earlier included in 3:28? If those in verses 26-29 are baptized members, then so is the child in 4:1. The relationship in baptism between adult believers (3:26-29) and their young children (4:1) is precisely the relationship that existed long before baptism replaced circumcision. Abraham as a pagan believed before he was circumcised (as in 3:26-27), but from that point on his children were in the covenant (as in 4:1). The major change in emphasis in the New Covenant is that it
includes far more, not far less. Whereas only a few Gentiles were included in the covenant in the Old Testament, the Abrahamic promise anticipated a time when “in your seed [Christ] all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Acts 3:25 with Gen. 12:3; 28:14; also see Gen. 18:18; 22:18; 26:4). Galatians 4:1 is simply reaffirming the promise that families continue to be included in the Abrahamic covenant. Thus the list of those “baptized into Christ” (3:26) includes not only Jews and Greeks, slaves and free, males and females, but also the children of those believers.

Let’s go through the list of baptized people one by one and show how the very list reinforces this conclusion. In verse 28, Jews who belong to Christ are said to be part of the Abrahamic covenant and “heirs according to the promise.” How was this promise made? The form of the promise given to Abraham was “to you and to your descendants.”

36 What is the most natural reading that a believing Jew would make of this text? Certainly not that children were excluded. Though the New Testament records great controversy over the change in the sign (from circumcision to baptism), there is not the slightest hint of a controversy over a supposed exclusion of children.

Paul also includes Gentiles as heirs because the Abrahamic promise had not only been made to embrace “nations” (literally Gentiles - see Gen. 17:14). Every promise either includes this phrase (13:15; 17:8; 26:3) or similar phrases: “families” (12:3), “to your descendants” (12:7; 15:18; 24:7), “to you and your descendants” (17:8), “your descendants” (13:15; 16: 15; 5, 13), “the one who shall come from your own body shall be your heir” (15:4), “with him for an everlasting covenant and with his descendants after him” (17:19), “your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies” (22:17), “in your seed” (22:18). The heart of the Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 17) could not be more clear: ”And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land… and I will be their God… As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you. Every male child among you shall be circumcised; and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any stranger who is not your descendant. He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.” (Gen. 17:7-14)
New Testament passages which include children • 27

18:18; 22:18; 26:4), but had explicitly said, “in you all the families of the earth will be blessed” (cf. Gen. 12:3; 28:14 and Acts 3:25). Notice that the covenantal concept of “families” being included was not restricted to the nation of Israel, but was extended to the Gentiles. Thus the Gentile believers could expect that children would continue to be in the covenant.

Paul goes on to include slaves and free since they had been included under Abraham. The Abrahamic covenant elevated the status of slaves to be spiritual equals to free. The Abrahamic covenant made revolutionary changes to the status of slaves in every nation up through Rome. And thus Paul addresses the slave Onesimus as “a beloved brother” (Philemon 16) and the slaves in the church of Ephesus as “servants of Christ” (6:6) who equally serve Christ “whether slave or free” (6:8). It was the Abrahamic covenant that gave these slaves an equal footing before God.

He includes males and females since a female infant was in the Old Testament period considered by baptism to be a “daughter of Abraham” (Luke 13:16). Women today are not blessed in an entirely different way than Sarah was, but are “like Sarah… whose daughters you are” (1 Peter 3:6). It was not just the New Covenant, but the Abrahamic covenant itself that elevated the status of women to being joint heirs with their husbands. Sarah exercised faith just as Abraham did - “By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised” (Heb. 11:11 in NKJV).

Thus Galatians 3:28 is not a radical overturning of the Abrahamic covenant (as most interpretations believe), but showing the radical nature of the Abrahamic covenant which we are in. There is no controversy about whether adults must profess faith in Christ to be considered heirs of the covenant. What is at issue is whether the children of a believing Jew, Gentile, slave, freeman, male or female belong to the covenant and are heirs of its provisions. Baptists say “No.” We say “Yes.” 4:1 settles the issue: “Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child...” The word for “child” is napion and refers to a small child. It is clear that the children of believers continue to be in the Abrahamic covenant and are heirs to the promise. They are under guardians (4:2) to bring them to faith (3:24). As

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37 See Appendix B for a discussion of Old Testament baptisms that accompanied circumcision and in the case of women and of repentant excommunicated men who were seeking readmission, how baptism substituted for circumcision
Christ made so clear in Luke 18:15-16, we are called to bring children to Christ because they are in the kingdom in terms of privilege.

3. Other “proof-texts” that can be brought forward in defense of infant baptism are the many household baptisms that are recorded for us. (And one text specifically mentions “children.”) Household baptisms have been written off by Baptists as being households where all the members were of age. In an age of no birth control and of large families, it is almost unthinkable that so many household baptisms could all have “happened” to occur in families where there were no young children. In the case of the Philippian jailer it is almost unthinkable since a jailer would have been a man still in his virile years.

In fact, the only recorded baptisms that we can be absolutely certain did not include a household were the baptisms of Jesus (unmarried), the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:36 He couldn’t have children!), of Paul (Acts 9:18; 22:16 Paul didn’t have children!) and of the “twelve men” who came without wives or children (Acts 19:3-5, 7 unmarried?). That means that the only baptisms which we know were “non-household” baptisms, were non-household baptisms because there were no households to baptize!

That being the case, it is helpful to statistically evaluate the number and type of New Testament baptisms to demonstrate that household baptisms were the norm, not the exception. I have divided the twelve instances of baptisms in Acts and the Epistles into four categories: 1) those where it is certain that no children (or wives) were baptized, 2) those where it is uncertain (based on the text itself), 3) those where there are strong hints that a household baptism took place, and 4) household baptisms explicitly mentioned.

There is really only one passage that leaves uncertainty about whether household baptisms occurred. This does not mean that households were not baptized, but only that the text does not specify a household. The text is Acts 8:12 and records that among the Samaritans “both men and women

38(Both Baptists and Presbyterians alike usually say that we must distinguish between Christian baptism and the baptism of John. See for example Acts 19:1-10 where those baptized by John are rebaptized by the apostles.). Though John’s baptism does not specifically mention children (it only says, “And there went out to him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized.” Mark 1:5), if his baptism was proselyte baptism (which is almost certain - See Oscar Culmann; and Kittel under “Baptizm”) then the whole family was baptized together with the repenting adults. Thus the baptisms of John are further evidence of household baptism.
were baptized.” It could be interpreted to mean 1) that adult men and women were the only ones baptized (in which case it would be a “non-household” baptism), or 2) (as the Greek can be construed) it could mean simply “both males and females were baptized,” or39 lastly, it could simply be specifying the heads of households and the women without ruling out children. This last interpretation seems to be the only way to account for the discrepancy between Acts 18:8 (where Paul baptized the whole household of Crispus) and 1 Corinthians 1:14f (where Paul says that the only baptisms he did in Corinth were those of “Crispus and Gaius” and the household of Stephanus.). See discussion of next paragraph. So the language of Acts 8:12 is not unusual even if household baptisms occurred on that occasion. But we have left it in the category of “uncertain” simply based on contextual evidence.

The third category is that which contains hints that households were baptized. The first text is 1 Corinthians 1:14 which says, “I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius.” At first reading, since wives are not mentioned, it may appear that this is a case of bachelors who were baptized. While it is possible they were unmarried and belong in the non-household category, there are strong hints that this was not the case. It is clear that there was a prominent Crispus that was baptized with his whole household in Acts 18:8. It could be objected that Timothy and not Paul possibly baptized this Crispus since both were present. However, since that Crispus was so prominent in Corinth, it would be highly unlikely that he would have spoken of a different Crispus without saying, “the son of ____” or in some other way making clear which Crispus he was referring to. Furthermore, there is no New Testament evidence for another Crispus in Corinth. Therefore, since it is almost certain that it was the same Crispus, and since it is certain that his wife believed and was baptized at the same time (Acts 18:8), it follows that Paul only mentions the head of the household with the understanding that both Crispus and Gaius represented their households. The “also” in 1 Corinthians 1:16 seems to confirm this: “Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanus.” “Also the household” implies that the other two were households. This would place Crispus and Gaius clearly in the category of household

39Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 1, pp. 360-363 points out that ἄνδρον can be used to mean “male” even when children are referred to, as in τον ἄνδρον αἱπατίς. Likewise, on pages 776 it shows that γυνή can mean female.
baptisms. However, since there is an outside possibility that there was another Crispus at Corinth, and since it is possible to interpret the “also” without including the “household,” I wouldn’t want to press that point, so I am including both Crispus and Gaius only in the category which hints strongly at household baptisms.

Acts 2 does not specifically say that women or infants were baptized, but there are several strong hints which almost necessitate that interpretation. The text simply says “three thousand souls” were baptized (Acts 2:41). However, in Peter's admonition to the crowd he said, “Repent [active tense], and let every one of you be baptized [“let be baptized” is a passive tense] . . . For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.” (Acts 2:38-39) Peter is making a logical deduction, and if the deduction is to follow the rules of logic, there must be the same terms in the conclusion (Repent and let every one of you be baptized) as in the premise (the promise is to you and to your children and to all who are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call). The “every one of you” surely includes the “children.” This conclusion is further strengthened when it is realized that the promise Peter was alluding to was the “promise of the Spirit” (Acts 2:33) which was first promised through the Abrahamic covenant (cf. Gal. 3:14) and was later promised again through David (Acts 2:29-34) and through Joel (Acts 2:16-21). In each case, the covenant promise included the children. As we saw under principle #2, this promise that Peter is alluding to necessarily must include the whole family. The connection between the call to repent and the baptism of “every one of you” is the same principle given in Acts 16:31-33: “So they said, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.’ And immediately he and all his family were baptized.” (This is simply an example of the representational principle described under principle #6, paragraph 10.) Notice too that prior to Peter’s promise to the children of those who repent, he had quoted Joel saying, “I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days” (Acts 2:17-18). Every age category was included. The Abrahamic promise was a far reaching promise. Logically, contextually, and
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theologically, it seems extremely difficult to avoid the conclusion that children were baptized on that day.\textsuperscript{40}

This leaves five Christian baptisms that are clearly household: 1) the baptism of Cornelius’ family in Acts 10:47,48 and 11:14, 2) the baptism of Lydia’s family in Acts 16:15, 3) the baptism of the Philippian jailer's family in Acts 16:32-33, 4) the baptism of Crispus’ family in Acts 18:8 and 5) the baptism of Stephanus’ family in 1 Corinthians 1:16. The following chart shows that this was the norm:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLEARLY HOUSEHOLD</th>
<th>FAVORS HOUSEHOLD</th>
<th>UNCERTAIN</th>
<th>CLEARLY NON-HOUSEHOLD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stephanus (1 Cor. 1:16)</td>
<td>Gatus (1 Cor. 1:14)</td>
<td>12 disciples of John (Acts 19:5,7) no wives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crispus (Acts 18:8)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jailer (Acts 16:32, 33)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You can immediately see that there is not a single clear case of a man failing to be baptized along with his family. The only non-household baptisms are families where there is no household that could be baptized! Thus, of the eight baptisms left (nine if the Crispus of 1 Cor. 1:14 is a

\textsuperscript{40}To those who object that the New Testament only applies the Abrahamic promise to those with faith, two things should be remembered. First God gives the gift of faith (John 6:29,35-39,44,45,64,65; Acts 3:16; 18:27; Rom. 12:3; Eph. 1:19; 3:12; Gal. 5:22; Phil. 1:29; 3:9; 2 Pet. 1:1,3,5). Second, the same condition of faith has always held true even in the Old Testament. Paul makes clear that the Abrahamic promises were ultimately only made to Christ (Gal. 3:16; 2 Cor. 1:20; Rom. 15:8; 9:6) and thus to the elect whom Christ took upon Him (Heb. 2:16; Gal. 3:16,26-29; Rom. 9:6-8). The promises are conditioned upon union with Christ. However, because the outward administration of the covenant was along generic lines, all children were included until they rejected the covenant promises. God took pains to make it clear that the sign of the covenant was not coterminous with those who would ultimately be the elect (it is not even in Baptist churches by the way). He said that circumcision had to be applied to Ishmael (Gen. 17:10,14) even though it was revealed that Ishmael would ultimately break the covenant (Gen. 17:18-21). This is because the sign of the covenant shows not only the promise, but also the need for grace, and the responsibilities Ishmael had to the covenant conditions. If Ishmael broke the covenant he would be “cut off” in judgment. If a child breaks the covenant, baptism is also a pledge that the child will be judged with a baptism of fire. Unless one receives Christ’s substitutionary baptism on the cross (Luke 12:50; Mark 10:38), he himself will be baptized on judgment day with fire. Thus in both Testaments we find Israel and true Israel (Rom. 9), children of promise and children of flesh (Gal. 4:28-29), wheat and tares, etc.
different Crispus than in Acts 18:8), one is uncertain, three strongly favor household baptism, and five are household baptisms without any controversy. If, as I have shown, the baptisms in column two are indeed household baptisms, we have a situation where 7 out of 11 (8 out of 12 if the Crispuses are different) are household baptisms. But since column four should be left off of the calculation, 7 out of 8. Since the eighth one is in the uncertain category, it becomes clear that there is no evidence against our position that all families were baptized when the head of the family came to Christ. 1 Corinthians 7:14 shows that children were even baptized when only the wife came to Christ as well. (This may have been the situation with Lydia.) Thus household baptisms are a proof-text for infant baptism, especially when the Acts 2 passage clearly includes the word “children” in it.

Two other Scriptures which are at least logically related to infant baptism are 1 Corinthians 10:1-2 where children were certainly baptized when they went through the Red Sea (“were all baptized unto Moses”) and thus stood as a type of the church being baptized unto Christ, and Ephesians 5:26 which speaks of the baptism of the church shortly before addressing children as if they are already in the church (6:1-4). There is no evidence that children were ever excluded from baptism when they were present, but there is plenty of New Testament evidence that they were baptized.

The doctrine of household baptism is simply the age-old application of the representational principle of the covenant that we looked at earlier. Whether we think it fair or not, what Adam did, affected his posterity. What Noah did, affected his family. What Abraham did affected his family. Rahab’s faith led to the salvation of her house (Josh 2:13,18; 6:23-25). This representational principle was true even of the yearly Passover sacrifice: “Every man shall take for himself a lamb . . . a lamb for a household.” When we baptize our children, we are declaring as Joshua did, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Josh. 24:15). And such a declaration of faith brings covenantal blessing upon the whole household. God tells Noah, “Come into the ark, you and all your household, because I have seen that you are righteous before Me in this generation.” (Gen. 7:1) It was Noah’s faith that resulted in their salvation. Hebrews affirms this as well. “By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of
the righteousness which is according to faith” (Heb. 11:7). In fact, Peter thinks this representational work of Noah is precisely what baptism is all about. He applies the story of Noah to modern baptism: “... the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. And corresponding to that baptism now saves you (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

If children were not baptized, one would expect that the New Testament would instruct children to come to baptism when they came to the place where they made profession of faith. Or one would at least expect that there would be a reference to a child who had grown up in a Christian home being baptized upon profession of faith. But on the contrary, during that forty-year period that the New Testament was written there is not the slightest whisper of a hint of children of believing parents being baptized after profession of faith.

Jews were used to having their children included in the church. If that were no longer the case, we would expect that the Jews would have raised a controversy over it. They certainly raised a big controversy over every other change that was made: they quibbled over meat, drink, impurity, circumcision, sacrifices and a host of other rituals, but we never see even a hint of controversy about the removal of children from the covenant! That was because children were never removed! When one understands the abundance of positive evidence for infant baptism that has been presented in this paper, this silence of the Jews is really a deafening silence! It is unexplainable if infants were excluded from the covenant.
Appendix A – Three Baptismal Homilies

Homily #1 Preached 11/1/97

We are having a baptism today at a building dedication service. And I think that is such a great reminder to us that though physical buildings are important, they are not nearly as important as the spiritual temple of Christ - a glorious building made of living stones - men, women and children. And it should be our desire that this physical edifice around us would be used to the glory of God and the building up of the bride of Christ.

But before I baptize [the baby], let me explain why Scripture includes not just adults in the spiritual building-stones, but also the children of believers. When we admit adults into the church, we also bring in families. And I love the way the Bible treats families. It doesn’t divide the families up. When it is time for worship, Scripture says, “Gather the people together, men and women and little ones...that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the LORD your God and carefully observe all the words of this law” (Deut. 31:12). God takes the families as a unit. He makes promises to families. He made His covenant with Adam’s family, with Noah’s family, with Abraham’s family, with Moses, Phinehas, David and many other families. When Zacchaeus believed, salvation grace invaded his whole house. Christ said to him, “Today salvation has come to this household, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:9). And that is why the Old Testament had entire families circumcised and why in the New Testament entire families were baptized. Baptism replaces circumcision as the sign of the covenant, and over and over again baptism is tied to the Abrahamic covenant. If Baptism is the sign of the covenant, then we have no choice but to baptize infants because God has mandated that the sign of the covenant be applied to the children of believers. The [parents] have already offered up their other children to the Lord, and baptism is God’s assurance that He welcomes our little ones. Baptism doesn’t save them, but it is the sign of God’s promised salvation, and it is also the parents pledge to raise them up in the way of the Lord.

As [the baby] is baptized this evening, let’s remember the words in Luke 18:15-16: “Then they also brought infants to Him that He might touch them; but when His disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to Him and said, “Let the little children come to Me, and do
not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” If Christ included infants and little children in the kingdom, who are we to reject them? No - God has always dealt with families in the covenant.

In Acts 3 Peter said, “Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus...for the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off” (Acts 2:38-39) - many generations are included. In the next chapter Peter promises “you are sons ...of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed’” (Acts 3:25). Praise God for His covenant with the family. Praise God for the promise in Acts, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved; you and your house” (Acts 16:31). I don’t know about you, but those words, “and your house” are a wonderful comfort to me. Those words are strewn throughout Scripture.

Seven of the baptisms mentioned in the New Testament are household baptisms. The others were not simply because there were no children. Christ was not married, nor was Paul. The Ethiopian Eunuch could not have children. The overwhelming evidence is for family baptism.

And it is a beautiful symbol of the fact that salvation is by grace alone and not by works. Christ said we come into the kingdom like little children. We are born through no choice of our own. But baptism by sprinkling symbolizes the same thing. It is God’s action upon us, not our action towards God. God’s mode of baptism in the Spirit was by shedding forth, pouring and coming upon people. [Acts 1:5,8;2:3,17,33;10:44;11:15; etc.] We do not presume to have a better mode than God uses.

And so this evening you too will be covenanting not only with [the parents] but also with [the baby]. Baptism is a sign of what God has promised to the family - that He would be a God to us and to our children after us, and it is a seal or pledge of those promises. As the parents claim that promise in faith, God will fulfill the same. Raise up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

Homily #2 Preached 9/14/97

[Genesis 17:9-14 was read]

Why would I read a passage on the circumcision of Abraham and his children at an event like Baptism? Let me give you five reasons:

First, because the New Testament says that New Testament believers are in the Abrahamic covenant, and it refers to that fact over
50 times. If believers covenant with God like Abraham did, then it explains why we include children in the covenant, doesn’t it? Including children in the covenant was an essential feature of being in the Abrahamic covenant. Look at verse 10 for example: “This is my covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you. Every male child among you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and You.”

If the Abrahamic covenant in its essence includes children, how can we exclude children today? Turn with me to Galatians 3:26-4:1. “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” I want you to notice that when we put our faith in the Lord Jesus and are baptized into the church, at that moment we become Abraham’s seed and are heirs according to the promise. No one questions the fact that verse 28 lists the baptized members (cf. V. 27) of the covenant.

But it is important that you not stop reading in verse 29. It is not just believers that are heirs. Their children are too. 4:1 says, “Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child...” Did you get that? A child continues to be part of the Abrahamic covenant because that feature is at the essence of the Abrahamic covenant. It doesn’t mean the child is saved. That child must be nurtured and led to faith. It says, “Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father.” Chapter 3:24 had already told us the role of these guardians and stewards: “Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” We look forward to the time when our children will come to faith. But our children are not to be treated as in the world. 4:1 makes clear they are in the group of those listed in the covenant.

That’s why Peter’s sermon on the Abrahamic covenant in Acts 2 says, “for the promise is to you and to your children and to all who are afar off.” He was referring to the Abrahamic promise which is still to our children. That’s why Acts 3 says that in Christ all the families of the earth would be blessed according to the promise to Abraham. The family feature of the
Abrahamic covenant continues into New Testament times. And that is why [parents] are bringing their children. So the first reason Genesis 17 is very relevant on this occasion is that the New Testament says that we are in the Abrahamic covenant and essential to that covenant is children.

A second reason why this passage is relevant is that Colossians 2:11-12 among other passages says that baptism corresponds to circumcision and replaces circumcision. Now to the Jews that would not have seemed like an odd thing since baptism had acted as a substitute for circumcision for 1000’s of years in the case of women or of excommunicated men. From the time of Moses on, males were circumcised and baptized on the eighth day; females were baptized on the 16th day and their baptism was treated as a circumcision. This is why Romans 2:26 says that Gentiles who come into the church are “counted as circumcised” and in the previous verse the excommunicated Jews are counted as uncircumcised. When Israelites were excommunicated from the community they were treated as Gentiles. And when they came back into the community, recircumcision was not possible, so they were baptized with the Baptism of nida or what was sometimes called the “baptism from the dead” or “Proselyte baptism.” When I was younger, I was fascinated with the vigorous debates that some of my Baptist friends had over John the Baptist. I wondered why some of them were so insistent that John’s baptism was a new baptism not authorized by the Old Testament, or why they said that it was not Jewish proselyte baptism (which I believe it was). I came to discover why: Jewish proselyte baptism baptized the whole family upon the parent’s profession of faith. So if baptism replaces circumcision as the New Testament indicates, then we ought to look to this chapter to see to whom it applies. It applies not just to adult believers, but also to children.

And this theme of tying baptism to Abraham is common. John the Baptist tied his baptism in with the Abrahamic covenant. The discussion of baptism in Acts 2 is tied in with the covenants of promise. Acts 3’s discussion of whether Gentiles could come into the church is based on the Abrahamic covenant which says in both Genesis 12:3 and 28:14 that “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” The discussion of baptism in Galatians 3-4 is based on the Abrahamic covenant. So the second reason this passage is relevant is that baptism replaces circumcision and just as circumcision is applied to infants and households, baptism must be also.
A third reason why this passage is relevant is because the New Testament keeps appealing to the promise made to Abraham applying to us and to our children. If you examine every promise made from Genesis 12-25 you will see that they are all made to both Abraham and his descendants. For example, look at verse 7: “And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you.” God promises to be a God not only to Abraham, but also to his descendants. And he makes that promise something that can never be superceded by later revelation because this is an everlasting covenant. And Paul makes a big point in Galatians 3:17-18 that the covenant under Moses which came 430 years later, cannot annul the covenant made with Abraham that it should make the promise of no effect. Genesis 17 continues to apply. Thus we find in Acts 2 that Peter applies the promise of Abraham to New Testament children when he says, “for the promise is to you and to your children and to all who are afar off.” Children were clearly included in that call for baptism in the previous verse because the whole discussion was based on the Abrahamic covenant and God’s promise to believers and their children. Why does Galatians 4:1 include children as being heirs even before they come to faith? Because the verse before says that believers become “Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:29). That whole passage is discussing baptism from the perspective of the Abrahamic promise and so it is no wonder that Paul concludes, “Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child...” etc. Children are heirs of the promise just as believing adults are. In Acts 17 Paul does the same with the Philippian jailer when he says, “believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved; you and your household.” His sign that he believed that promise was receiving baptism, the sign of the covenant, for his whole household. And we see a similar Abrahamic pattern with the baptism of five other households. Household baptism occur 6 times in the New Testament and the only baptisms where we know children were excluded were ones where children were not present: like Christ and Paul who had no children, or the Ethiopian eunuch who couldn’t have any. The New Testament applies the promise to Abraham and his children to believers and their children today. This promise is also explicitly tied to baptism.

So we have seen three reasons why Genesis 17 is so relevant to what is happening this morning: first, that we are under the Abrahamic covenant and its requirements; secondly, baptism replaces circumcision, and thirdly
that the promise to Abraham applies today because it is an everlasting promise which cannot be annulled - a promise to believers and their children.

The fourth reason why Genesis 17 is so relevant is that when you go back to the foundations of a doctrine, you can often correct major errors. There are those who say that when the sign of the covenant is applied to children, they are regenerated. Roman Catholics say this and Lutherans say this. We Presbyterians vigorously disagree. And I think there can be no better example than Ishmael to prove that the sign of the covenant does not regenerate children. That was Paul’s point in Romans 3. He said that there was much value in circumcision in the Old Testament, but regenerating was not one of them. Many Lutherans insist that 1 Corinthians 7:14 teaches that when a child is outwardly cleansed by water, it is also made inwardly holy. But when that passage says, “otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy” it is referring to an outward setting apart to salvation and an outward cleansing by water. The unbelieving spouse is also sanctified outwardly to salvation, but only the child is sanctified and cleansed.

Fifth, this passage shows the seriousness of excluding our children from baptism. Verse 14 says “But the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.” Moses was rebuked for failing to circumcise his child because God claimed the child. And in the same way, when His disciples sought to exclude children, Christ said, “Allow the little children to come unto Me and do not forbid them, for of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Luke 18:15-16). I believe it is a serious thing to forbid children from coming to Christ when He has commanded us to welcome them.

There are many who have objections to infant baptism, but as John Calvin said long ago, every argument that could be brought against the wisdom of infant baptism could be equally brought against the wisdom of infant circumcision. And thus, it is really a questioning of God’s wisdom. As the [parents] come forward at this time to present [their baby] to the Lord, I want to encourage every parent to lay claim to the promise given to Abraham - that He will be a God to you and to your descendants after you.
Homily #3 Preached 11/24/96

Please turn to Joel 2:28-29. This is a familiar passage and one that was applied to baptism by Peter in Acts 2. Let’s begin reading at verse 28: “And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; and also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.”

I want to make three quick observations related to baptism.

First, as a pastor I cannot change a child’s heart. In this passage, it is God who pours the Spirit upon people and He does it when and where He wills. John the Baptist recognized this. He could give water baptism to the families of those who repented, but he couldn’t give the Spirit. He said, “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.” Your faith and expectation should not be in the water or the pastor, but in God alone.

Second, the Spiritual baptism God gives is by pouring. Verse 28 says, “Then I will pour My Spirit on all flesh.” Verse 29 says, “I will pour out My Spirit in those days.” In Acts 2 Peter made clear that this passage prophesied the same baptism that John prophesied. If God baptizes by pouring, shouldn’t we do so? Over and over in the book of Acts this baptism is said to be poured out upon people, or shed forth or to come upon a person. So even though we allow for immersion, we believe that pouring or sprinkling best symbolizes the baptism of the Spirit. Certainly God used pouring as His method in Acts. [See examples in Acts 1:5,8; 2:3,17,33; 10:44; 11:15; etc. - pk]

Third, households receive the promise. Verses 28-29 describe a Middle Eastern household. Not only are sons and daughters, old men and young, household menservants and maidservants receivers of the Spirit, but all flesh. That phrase “all flesh” was used to indicate that everyone was wiped out in Noah’s flood. Joel prophecies a new pouring out of the heavens, but instead of all flesh being destroyed, men, women and children, - they receive life. Peter in Acts 3 applies this even to teknois - little children. After quoting this verse he said, “the promise is to you and to your children...” What an encouragement!

It might be thought that Peter is applying that too broadly since little children cannot repent, and since they certainly can’t prophecy. But the
phrase “all flesh” is more inclusive than the next phrase “sons and daughters.” Look at Joel 2:15-16 to see how infants were part of God’s call to repentance. They were represented by parents who said like Joshua, “As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” Joel 2:15-16: “Blow the trumpet in Zion, consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly; gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children and nursing babes [notice that they are a part of it]; let the bridegroom go out from his chamber, and the bride from her dressing room. Let the priests, who minister to the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar; let them say, ‘Spare Your people, [who are God’s people? The ones just listed] O LORD, and do not give Your heritage to reproach, that the nations should rule over them. Why should they say among the peoples, “Where is their God?”’” Where is their God? Each of those described, including the nursing infant, had God as his God, and thus was brought before the Lord on that day of repentance by his parents. They were all part of the congregation.

And we can be encouraged that God claims our children for himself as well. Isaiah 44:3 says, “I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, and My blessing on Your offspring; they will spring up among the grass [that is a symbol of children growing up - “they will spring up among the grass] like willows by the watercourses. One will say, ‘I am the LORD’s.’” etc. That is God’s normal pattern, to claim the children young and as they spring up by the watercourses, to lead them to faith later. Christ said, “Allow the little children to come to Me, and do not forbid them. For of such is the kingdom of heaven.”

So this passage reminds us first, that water baptism is not all that is needed. Christ said that we must be born of water and the Spirit. So don’t superstitiously look to me or to the water. Look to the Lord who alone can give the Spirit. Second, water baptism should symbolize the way God baptizes - by pouring. And so we baptize by pouring. Third, God has chosen to pour out His Spirit on entire households. And since water baptism symbolizes that, you find the consistent pattern in the New Testament of water baptism being given to entire households. As the [parents] come forward at this time, let’s lay claim to Paul’s promise. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved; you and your household. Baptism is a sign and seal of God’s promise and of our faith in God’s promise. Let us bring our children in faith. Amen.
Appendix B - Infant Baptism Started With Moses

Hebrews 5:11-6:3 tells us that before we can go on to understand more Christian doctrine, and certainly before we can be teachers, we need to understand the fundamentals. Included in these fundamentals are the resurrection, judgment day, repentance, faith and the “doctrine of baptisms.” Since there is only “one baptism” in the New Testament (Eph. 4:5) it is clear that He is talking about Old Testament baptisms. There is some way in which the doctrine of baptisms in the Old Testament is foundational to the church. He expected the church to understand it, and connected Old Testament baptisms (Heb. 9-10) with Christian baptism (Heb. 10:22). Paul and Peter also expected their hearers to understand Old Testament baptism in such passages as 1 Corinthians 10:2, 1 Corinthians 15:29 and 1 Peter 3:21. New Testament Baptism is rooted in the Old Testament and anticipated by Old Testament saints as is obvious from such passages as John 1:25; Acts 8:28-39; 26:22; Is. 52:15; Ezek. 36:25-27; Acts 17:11.

One of the more intriguing passages on Baptism is 1 Corinthians 15:29 which speaks of those “who are baptized for the dead.” Some (like Mormons) have argued that this means proxy baptism on behalf of dead people. This interpretation could fit a secondary Greek meaning of the preposition ὑπέρ, but makes no sense in terms of the flow of Paul’s argument and finds no precedent in history.41 Scholars have been baffled by such a translation because there is no historical evidence of proxy baptism in Judaism, Christianity or paganism, yet Paul seems to imply that this practice was commonplace. Secondly, one would expect a preposition of substitution (such as ἀντί) rather than the generic

41 William Lane says, “The problem is two-fold: (1) There is no historical or biblical precedent for such baptism. The NT is otherwise completely silent about it; there is no known practice in any of the other churches nor in any orthodox Christian community in the centuries that immediately follow; nor are there parallels or precedents in pagan religion. This is a genuinely idiosyncratic historical phenomenon…The second problem is theological and has to do with how Paul can appeal, without apparent disapproval, to a practice that stands in such contradiction to his own understanding both of justification by grace through faith, which always implies response on the part of the believer, and of baptism as personal response to grace received.” (NICN: The First Epistle to the Corinthians, p. 764.)
Infant Baptism Started With Moses • 43

preposition ὑπὲρ.42 if proxy baptism was intended. Thirteen tentative solutions have been collected by Thiselton,43 but every one has a weakness in explaining either the syntax, the meaning of the preposition ὑπὲρ, the flow of Paul’s argument, the theology of Paul as a whole or evidence that such a concept of baptism was ever present in the church. An explanation that is not mentioned by Thiselton, and has none of the weaknesses mentioned, was provided by R.L. Dabney in his Lectures in Systematic Theology. He says that this is simply a reference to the Old Testament baptism of those who have touched a dead body and are thereby unclean (Numbers 19).44 The preposition in 1 Corinthians 15:29 should thus be translated either as “because of” or “with reference to.” The situation was this: Whenever a person touched a dead body, a grave, or lived in the same tent where someone died, or touched a leprous person45 he had to receive what the Jews called a “baptism of nidah.” (The Old Testament refers to it as the “water of nidah,” sometimes translated as the “water of purification” or “water of separation.”)

“And a clean person shall take hyssop, and shall dip it in the water, and shall sprinkle it upon the tent, and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons that were there, and upon him that touched the bone, or the slain, or the dead, or the grave.” (Numb. 19:18)

However, it was not just the physically dead who were treated as dead. Numbers 5:2-3 says, “Command the children of Israel that they put out of the camp every leper, everyone who has a discharge, and whoever becomes defiled by a dead body. You shall put out both male and female; you shall put them outside the camp, that they may not defile their camps in the midst of which I dwell.” Leviticus 22:1-9 also says that those with discharges, lepers, those who have touched dead and the heathen are “cut off” from the people of God and from God’s presence until they have received the baptism of purification. When people were “cut off” from the people of Israel, they were not put to death. That was a covenental death;

42 ὑπὲρ can mean 1) over, above, 2) a marker of activity in some entity’s interest: for, in behalf of, for the sake of, 3) a marker of cause or reason: because of, for the sake of, for, 4) a marker of general content: about, concerning, 5) a marker of degree: beyond, more than, over and above. See BDAG
44 R. L. Dabney, Lectures in Systematic Theology, p. 760. “the Apostle here refers to the Levitical rule of Numbers xix:14-19. Were there no resurrection, a corpse would be like any other clod; and there would be no reason for treating it as a symbol of moral defilement, or for bestowing on it, so religiously, the rites of sepulture.”
45 Lepers were treated as though they had died.
a covenantal separation from the people of God. And the baptism from the dead is associated with all of these situations where a person was “cut off” from the people of God. Thus the word *nidah* is used in connection with

1. baptism by sprinkling of those contaminated by death or leprosy (Numb. 19; Lev. 13-14)
2. baptism by sprinkling of those who were covenantally dead and “cut off” from the people of God:
   a. *Nidah* is connected with the purification of anything or anyone that came out of heathen lands (Numb. 31:20-23)
   b. Purification of proselytes from heathen lands (Numb. 31:18,23 with Deut. 21:10-14). On the basis of these passages, and the use of *nidah* in Ezra 9:11; Lam. 1:17; Zech. 13:1 with 14:16-20, the Jews always treated the heathen as covenantally dead and in need of the baptism of purification (*nidah*). This “proselyte baptism” was in effect a “baptism from the dead” that the Jews were used to. This was the baptism of “purification” that both John the Baptist and Christ used for both Jew and Gentile alike (see John 3:22-26 for “purification” = “baptism”; see Luke 3:12,14 for baptisms of Gentiles; see Luke 3:7-9 for Jews being treated as “cut off” from Israel). They were declaring that Israel had become “cut off” from the people of

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46 These passages should not be interpreted so as to conflict with Exodus 34:12-16, Numbers 25:6-8, Deuteronomy 7:1-3, Josh. 23:12, 1 Kings 11:2, Ezra 9:2, Nehemiah 9:2, 13:23-27 or Malachi 2:14 all of which passages prohibit intermarriage with idolatrous Gentiles. Nor should it conflict with passages on divorce such as Deuteronomy 22:13-19,28-29; 24:1-4, Ezra 10:1-16, Nehemiah 13:23-30, and Malachi 2:14-16. The permission to marry a foreigner could only be in a situation similar to Rahab’s who had renounced idolatry and embraced Yahweh. The Old Testament did not forbid intermarriage with other nationalities. Rather it forbade intermarriage with other faiths. Christ’s own genealogy has examples of Gentiles who became Jews: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba.

Thus *The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge* says of Deut. 21:12-13, “This was a token of renouncing her religion, and becoming a proselyte to that of the Jews. This is still a custom in the East: when a Christian turns Mohammedan, his head is shaved, and he is carried through the city, crying, *la eelah eela allah wemochammed resoolu’lahee*, ‘There is no God but THE God, and Mohammed is the prophet of God.’”

47 The common practice of rebaptism for Jews who had been covenantally “cut off” through various defilements may have some implications for rebaptism of converts from Roman Catholic and Liberal Churches. Certainly a Jew could not be “re-circumcised” if he apostatized and later recovered, but if baptism took the role of circumcision, and was treated as circumcision, then the implication is that the rebaptisms were reapplications of the sign of the covenant. Thus, Paul in Romans 2:25-29 says, “For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as [logizomai - imputed] circumcision? And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law? For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but
he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.” Thus, when Israel failed to be circumcised in the heart, God called them Egypt (Josh. 5:7-9; Rev. 11:8), Sodom & Gomorrah (Is. 1:10; Jer. 23:14; Ezek. 16:53-55; Rev. 11:8), Samaria (Ezek. 16:53-55), etc. If they were treated as Gentiles during those periods, then the baptism of nidah had to be applied to the Jews upon their conversion, and since their families were Gentiles as well, their families would have to be “purified” by baptism as well. In the context of the baptism of nidah, it makes perfect sense for John the Baptist to require Jews to be baptized in his ministry. They were cut off from Israel (Luke 3:7-9).

If we do not keep clearly distinct the difference between Israel as a state and Israel as a church we will misinterpret many passages. When those with discharges are “cut off” from the people of God along with moral rebels, they are not executed. All executions are clearly noted with phrases such as “put to death,” “shall surely die,” “in dying he shall die,” etc. This is a phrase referring to covenantal death where the people were either officially excommunicated or treated as outside the church ceremonially. This presupposes of course that proto-synagogues existed in the time of Moses. That there were local synagogues from the time of Moses and after can be seen by comparing the following Scriptures which speak of local assemblies that worshipped every Sabbath and new moon: Acts 15:21; Ps. 74:8; Lev. 23:3; 2 Chron. 17:9; Deut. 18:6-8; Neh. 10:37-39; Lev. 23:3; Deut. 18:6; Judg. 17:7; 18:30; 19:1; 2 Kings 4:23. Especially significant are the following passages:

a. Acts 15:21 “For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath.” This verse establishes that synagogues are a Mosaic
speak of these baptisms, and especially of proselyte baptism as being “born” into Israel. This Jewish language was alluded to by Christ in John 3:5-7. Christ said that it is not enough to be “born of water.” One must also be “born of the Spirit” in order to truly be in the kingdom. The Jews unfortunately stressed only the outward rite of the baptism of *nidah*, and failed to grasp what the baptism pointed towards: the cleansing work of the Spirit. It is not just the New Testament that ties the meaning of water baptism to Spirit Baptism (Matt. 3:11; John 3:5; Acts 1:5; 10:44-48; 11:15-16). Christ implies that Nicodemus should have known better from the Old Testament. The Old Testament prophesied that when Israel would be cut off because of her need of *nidah* (Lam. 1:8,17; Ezek. 36:17-21), she would subsequently need a baptism by water and a baptism by the Spirit (Ezekiel 36:22-32) to take away the *nidah*-less condition (36:17) and bring restoration as God’s people (36:33-38). Isaiah 44:3-4 speaks of the same coupling of water baptism with Spirit baptism and says that these would be poured out upon believers and their children. Significantly, both passages are prophecies of the New Covenant and tie in with the prophecy of Christ’s redemption that would open up a fountain “for sin and for *nidah*” (Zech. 13:1).

Thus there is evidence not only for proselyte baptism (which we know from history included the infants) but also for the Jewish application of the same baptism of *nidah* (what Paul calls being “baptized from the dead”) to infants and any others who were covenantally treated as “cut off” from Israel through uncleanness. This infant baptism was in addition to circumcision for males and was treated as if it were circumcision for females (see principle #5 in the main body of this book). In the New Testament circumcision is completely removed and baptism is called

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b. Psalm 74:8 “They said in their hearts, ‘Let us destroy them altogether.’ They have burned up all the meeting places [Hebrew בתי and Greek Septuagint συνεκκοινη] of God in the land.” Already in Asaph’s day there were synagogues everywhere.

c. Lev. 23:3 “Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation [NIV translates it “sacred assembly.”] The Sabbath was to be a day of corporate worship in the land, and if the temple was the only place to do that, then most in Israel would have no place to worship since they could not travel to Jerusalem every week or they would spend all their time in travel. Compare 2 Kings 4:23.

d. 2 Chronicles 17:9; Deut. 18:6-8; Nehemiah 10:37-39 Levites went throughout the land teaching and came to be known as scribes. They were distinguished from the other sons of Levi (the priests) who ministered in the temple. Interestingly, the tithe went to the synagogues (Neh. 10:37-39) and the Levites in the synagogues in turn tithed by giving 10% of that tithe to the temple. So the synagogue was the basic institution of the church, though all of life including the church was in turn subject to the temple since the temple represented God’s throne room. When Israel was in exile, the synagogue was the only manifestation of the church on earth.

e. Examples of bad synagogues: Judges 17:7; 18:30; 19:1.

f. The synagogue form of worship was exactly the same as the Presbyterian form of worship as can be seen from Douglas Bannerman’s book *The Scripture Doctrine of The Church.* Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976. See also my paper discussing the doctrine of the church in the Old and New Testaments.
“Christian circumcision.” The chart explains the situation of *nidah* for a child and its mother in the Old Testament.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MOTHER</th>
<th>SON</th>
<th>DAUGHTER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>At birth</strong></td>
<td>Unclean because of blood discharge (Lev. 15:19). Everything she touches is unclean (Lev. 15:20-24)</td>
<td>Unclean until 8th day purification (Lev. 15:19 &amp; 12:2-3) NB “unclean” in 1 Cor. 7:14.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>On 8th day (M) and 2nd 8th day (F)</strong></td>
<td>a “baptism of purification” “as in the days of her customary impurity” (Lev. 12:2)</td>
<td>baptism purification of <em>nidah</em> &amp; circumcision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>After 8th day</strong></td>
<td>Still unclean with respect to “any hallowed thing ...[or] the sanctuary” (Lev. 12:4), but she did not defile her child.</td>
<td>clean (see above) Note that the temple purification is for the mother, not for the child (cf. Lev. 12:7-8; Lk 2:22-24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>After 2nd 8th day, i.e. after 14 days of uncleanness</strong></td>
<td>If she had a daughter, she was still unclean with respect to “any hallowed thing ...[or] the sanctuary” (Lev. 12:4), but she did not defile her child.</td>
<td>clean (see above) Note that the temple purification is for the mother, not for the child (cf. Lev. 12:7-8; Lk 2:22-24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>After 8 + 33 days</strong></td>
<td>If she had a son, she is now clean and ready to go to temple.</td>
<td>If a first-born son, he is presented at the temple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>After 14 + 66 days</strong></td>
<td>If a female child, mother is now clean and ready to go to the temple</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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49. Though her continuing blood flow will make her unclean once again, it is important for her to be cleansed after seven days for the cleansing of her son or daughter.

50. What the Jews called the “baptism of separation [Hebrew = *nidah*]” (translated in Scripture as “water of separation,” or “water for uncleanness”) was specified as being by “sprinkling” in Numbers 19:9-22. This Hebrew word *nidah* is not only used for ceremonial uncleanness from contact with dead, leprous, etc. (Numb 19), but it is also used of the sprinkling of anything that came out of heathen lands (Numb. 31:20-23) including young virgins taken captive who are willing to convert to God (Numb. 31:18,23 with Deut. 21:10-14). The word *nidah* is also clearly connected to the uncleanness a woman has after menstruation and childbirth in Leviticus 12:2,5; 15:19,20,24,25,26,33; 18:19; Lam. 1:17; Ezek. 18:6; 22:10; 36:17. Before a heathen could become a proselyte, he had to be purified from his uncleanness (Heb. of Numb. 31:18,23 with Deut. 21:10-14; Ezra 9:11; Lam. 1:17; Zech. 13:1 with 14:16-20; see also John the Baptist’s Jewish proselyte baptisms).

51. Kellog comments on this passage:

“Until the circumcision of the new-born child, on the eighth day, he was regarded by the law as ceremonially unclean. For this reason, again, the mother who had brought him into the world, and whose life was so intimately connected with his life, was regarded as unclean also. Unclean, under analogous circumstances, according to the law of xv.19, she was reckoned doubly unclean in this case, - unclean because of her issue, and unclean because of her connection with this child, uncircumcised and unclean. But when the symbolic cleansing of the child took place by the ordinance of circumcision, then her uncleanness, so far as occasioned by her immediate relation to him, came to an end. She was not indeed completely restored; for according to the law, in her still continuing condition, it was impossible that she should be allowed to come into the tabernacle of the Lord, or touch any hallowed thing; but the ordinance which admitted her child, admitted her also again to the fellowship of the covenant people.”
Appendix C – Analysis of Colossians 2.11-12

Diagrammatical analysis

Col. 2:10 ἔστιν

Col. 2:11 περιεμήθητε

Col. 2:12 συνταφέντες#

*See page 50 for the three grammatical possibilities of this genitive.
#See page 50 for the two grammatical possibilities of this participle.
Col. 2:10 who is ...etc.

Col. 2:11 you were circumcised

also In Whom

with circumcision

the made without hands

in putting off

of the body

of the sins of the flesh

in the circumcision

of Christ*

Col. 2:12 you were buried

in baptism with Him

you were raised

also in Whom

through the faith

in the working = raising Him

of God from the dead

*See page 50 for the three possible ways of interpreting the Greek grammar.

#This translation takes the Greek as a temporal participle. The instrumental participle is also a possibility. See page 50 for discussion.
Grammatical Possibilities

“the circumcision of Christ”

1. **Attributive Genitive.** (Also called the genitive of quality or description. The noun in the genitive [Christ] describes the character, quality or nature of the substantive [circumcision].) See Ferar Fenton, John Eadie, J. O. Buswell and Lightfoot. If this usage were applied here it would mean “Christian circumcision” (in distinction to “Mosaic circumcision”).

2. **Objective genitive.** (The noun in the genitive receives the action). See Meredith G. Kline, *By Oath Consigned*, pp. 44-47, 71-73. This usage would point to either Christ’s circumcision when He was eight days old which prefigured His later crucifixion, or it would refer to his death in 30 AD (metaphorically called a circumcision) which was prefigured by His literal circumcision.

3. **Subjective Genitive.** (The noun in the genitive produces the action). See Amplified New Testament. See also Kline, p. 71. This usage would point to regeneration as a spiritual circumcision performed by Christ on the heart.

4. (F. F. Bruce combines explanations 2 & 3.)

“buried with Him in baptism”

This is an adverbial clause that modifies the main verb “you were circumcised.” There are two possible uses of this participle:

1. **Temporal participle.** See Ferar Fenton, Amplified New Testament, Vincent, and Moffat. This is by far the most frequent usage of the adverbial participle, and it indicates the time at which the action of the main verb takes place. See Wenham, *Elements of N.T. Greek*, pp. 147ff, and Dana & Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, pp. 226,230. If this usage were intended, it would be translated “when you were buried.”

2. **Instrumental participle.** See J. O. Buswell. Examples of this usage are Acts 16:16; Matt. 6:27; 1 Tim. 1:12. If this usage were intended, it would be translated “by being buried with Him…”

Whatever may have been intended by the details of the passage it is an unavoidable fact that baptism and circumcision are identified as the same. Thus whether we say with Buswell, “You were circumcised… by being
baptized” or whether we say with others, “You were circumcised … when you were baptized,” the same conclusion is reached. Baptism is the New Testament counterpart to circumcision. And many Baptists have recently admitted that this passage does teach a definite correspondence between baptism and circumcision.

After an examination of Colossians 2:11-12, Paul K. Jewett says, “the use of the aorist passives throughout the passage (πετυμηθήτε, συνταφὲντες, συνηγερθήτε) makes it evident that to experience the circumcision of Christ, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, is the same thing as being buried and raised with him in baptism through faith. If this were true, the only conclusion we can reach is that the two signs, as outward rites, symbolize the same inner reality in Paul’s thinking. Thus circumcision may fairly be said to be the Old Testament counterpart of Christian baptism. So far, the Reformed argument, in our judgment, is biblical. In this sense ‘baptism,’ to quote the Heidelberg Catechism, ‘occupies the place of circumcision in the New Testament.’”

David Kingdon says, “Christian baptism takes over and deepens the spiritual and ethical significance of Old Testament circumcision, but it does not take over its national and fleshly meaning, for that has dropped away now that the ‘new age’ in the Spirit has come.”

That last statement by Kingdon is the common attempt to avoid the conclusion of infant baptism. These Baptists insist that there is a movement in redemptive history from external to internal, from visible to invisible, from earthly to heavenly, from fleshly to spiritual and from corporate to individual and personal. To quote Walter Chantry: “But the New Testament Church is come of age. It is by way of contrast, inward, spiritual, and personal.” Paul K. Jewett says, “… this THEN is of capital significance - the temporal, earthly, typical elements of the old dispensation were dropped from the great house of salvation as scaffolding from the finished edifice.” Infant baptism, they teach is part of that corporate, external, national scaffolding that has fallen away.

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54 In “Baptism and Covenant Theology,” Baptist Reformation Review, II:1
55 Infant Baptism, p. 91.
However, as we have seen under principle 6, the *individual* infant is every bit as important to the covenant as the individual believing adult, for of such is the kingdom of heaven (Luke 18:15-16). And the *corporate* reality of families and nations is not removed but expanded. Peter promises a time when “*all* the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Acts 3:25), and John anticipates a time when “*all* nations shall come and worship before” Him (Rev. 15:4). Thus there is an expansion from Jewish families and Jewish nation to all families and all nations. Certainly the Great Commission for the church is not an individualistic affair. Rather it is a command to disciple “*all nations*” (Matt. 28:19), a command which will be fulfilled in God’s mercy: “And the Scripture foreseeing that God would justify the nations by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, ‘In you all the nations shall be blessed.’” Indeed, *every* Old Testament blessing signed and sealed by circumcision finds a fuller and richer expansion in the New Testament. There is no falling away of external blessings. The promise of land is expanded to inheriting the earth (Matt. 5:5) and being “heir of the world” (Rom. 4:13). Provisional prosperity in the Old Testament is expanded with the wish that “you may prosper in *all* things and be in health, just as your soul prospers” (3 John 2). The external historical blessings promised in such passages as Psalm 72 are far fuller than anything experienced in the Old Testament. The nations are prophesied to submit to God’s civil laws (Is. 42:4). Even our fleshly bodies will be resurrected and we will inherit a new heavens and new earth in eternity (Rom. 8:18-23; 2 Pet. 3:13). Thus, Kingdon and Jewett have not been successful in evading the requirement that the sign of the covenant be applied to our children. The development from Old Testament to New Testament is not one of diminishment, but of expansion and fuller expression.
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